



# INSIDE STORIES

## On the Waterfront

film directed by Elia Kazan

Teaching notes prepared by Robert Cole

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# INTRODUCTION

*On the Waterfront* was produced and shown for the first time in 1954. The film was directed by Elia Kazan; and the script was written by Budd Schulberg from stories by a New York journalist, Malcolm Johnson, based on events on the New York waterfront in 1949. The film won eight Academy Awards including: best picture, best director and best actor for Marlon Brando.

## Beginnings

The idea for a film on the New York waterfront originated with the playwright Arthur Miller who worked there during World War Two. He was commissioned by Elia Kazan to write a screenplay which he called *The Hook*, based on the crude lifting tool used by workers on the docks. The script was taken to Harry Coen of Columbia Pictures, who agreed to shoot the picture on the proviso that the union bosses be represented as communists in the movie. Miller would not agree and the project was shelved. When Malcolm Johnson's stories appeared in the *New York Sun* Kazan hired screenwriter and novelist Bud Schulberg to develop the stories into a screen play (an account of Schulberg's approach and research can be found at the Wikipedia entry about *On the Waterfront*).

## Miller and Kazan

Arthur Miller, the most celebrated playwright on the American stage, met Elia Kazan in 1947 and was fortunate to secure him as director for two of his Broadway successes, *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*. Kazan was a rising star, having recently had outstanding success with the Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The two were friends and when they went to Hollywood with the screenplay of *The Hook*, Kazan introduced Miller to his then lover, Marilyn Monroe who later married Miller.

## The Intellectual Milieu

Both Miller and Kazan were part of a group of New York intellectuals, artists and writers who had discussed and explored socialist ideas in the 1930s and 1940s. Kazan was a member of the left wing social realist Group Theatre which produced plays, the most famous of which was *Waiting for Lefty* by Clifford Odets. Kazan, once a member of the communist party of America, was both an actor and director with this group, which also included Lillian Hellman and John Garfield. The Group Theatre was excited by the acting and production ideas of Stanislavski, and Kazan went on to form the Method Acting School in New York with fellow Group Theatre member Lee Strasberg. Other members of the Group Theatre included Karl Malden, who won an academy award for his performance of Mitch in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Lee J. Cobb, the original Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*. Marlon Brando studied acting under Stella Adler, another Group Theatre member.

## Post-War Communism

When World War Two ended in 1945, the Communist Soviet Union controlled most of Eastern Europe. A Communist uprising in Greece followed; and in 1948 Stalin tried to remove the United States, Britain and France from Berlin by instituting the 'Berlin Blockade'. In this year Winston Churchill made a speech in which he talked of an 'Iron Curtain' coming down over Europe. In 1949, Mao Tse Tung led the Chinese Communists to power and in 1950 the Korean War began. To a country weary from



six years of war, the prospect of a new enemy for the United States was alarming. A fear of possible attack arose in the USA and this fear developed into a concern about enemy infiltration into the political and cultural institutions of America.

## HCUA and Joseph McCarthy

The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HCUA, sometimes as HUAC) was an investigative committee of the United States House of Representatives. The HCUA was formed in the 1930s to investigate the activities of Nazis in America. It was re-formed after the war to investigate the Ku Klux Klan, but subsequently began to investigate Communist infiltration in to the entertainment industry and produced the 'Hollywood Blacklist'. People whose names were on this list were denied the right to work in Hollywood. Prominent Hollywood figures, such as Walt Disney, appeared before the committee naming people who were known to be associated with left-wing ideas. Members of the blacklist included Charlie Chaplin, Paul Robeson, Arthur Miller, Stella Adler, the composer Aaron Copland and the novelist Richard Wright, none of whom posed any threat to U.S. security.

In his position as the head of a Senate Committee on Government operations, Senator John Joseph McCarthy used his role to seek out communists in government departments. Using material from the FBI, McCarthy's committee ruined the careers and lives of many innocent people and created an atmosphere of paranoia in the country. McCarthy's committee claimed that unless former members of the Communist Party were prepared to name the names of other party members, their own patriotism could not be relied on. As a consequence, many creative artists never worked again.

## The Split Between Miller and Kazan

Both men were called on to appear before the HCUA. Miller refused, but Kazan cooperated, naming many of the people from the Group Theatre; later, Kazan claimed that he had spoken to everyone he named before his appearance. Miller believed Kazan's decision was motivated by his desire to move into film directing in Hollywood and many years later acknowledged that he could understand Kazan's position at the time. Yet, Miller never forgave him and suffered serious consequences. Whereas Kazan went on to a successful Hollywood career, Miller was blacklisted and held in contempt of Congress.

## Creative Arguments

Miller wrote two plays that critics have seen as responses to the consequences of the Communist paranoia of the 1950s. *The Crucible*, a play about the witch hunts in Salem, Massachusetts was intended as an allegory of the social upheaval in the United States in the late 1940s and 1950s. In 1954 Kazan directed *On the Waterfront*, a film in which an individual goes against his upbringing and his past loyalties to testify against his friends. In 1956, on the London stage, Miller presented *A View from the Bridge* in which a troubled man betrays his family out of personal imperatives he does not understand. The two old friends used their art to dramatise diametrically opposing views of the act of informing.

## The Crime Commission and Kazan's Political Imperative

At the end of the film, Friendly accuses Terry of the worst sin someone on the waterfront can commit, 'rattin' on us'. Terry's rejoinder is that he 'has been rattin' on myself all these years and I didn't even know it'. Kazan stated on a number of

occasions that *On the Waterfront* was an artistic expression of the personal struggle he went through before deciding to testify to the HCUA. The problem is that if we accept the film as a testament of Elia Kazan's moral struggle to testify or not, we must accept that the moral world of the film resembles that of 1950s America. It does not.

While it is undeniable that the people who collaborated to make the film were artists of protean capacity and that the evocation of evil and the depiction of the struggles of Terry Malloy are cinematic art of a high order, the problem for the audience is that the resolution of the opposing views comes down to a mere stoush. The fight and the dropping of Friendly in the Hudson River are emotionally satisfying but require Friendly to be portrayed as a fool. The portrayal of Friendly reduces to insignificance the enormity of the evil we have witnessed and allows Terry to be glamorised. On the docks, where 'that kid's fightin' like he used to', one man can do what thousands of cowards cannot do.

The ending shows us a child's picture of evil and how it should be combated. The statement that one brave display from Terry 'will give us back our union so we can run it on the up and up' is the desired happy ending of a fairy tale. It is difficult to avoid thinking that the great creative artist, Elia Kazan, is being less than completely honest when he likens Terry's struggle to his own.

# WAYS INTO THE TEXT

## Before studying the text

- Teachers need to decide to what extent the students require knowledge of the historical and political background of *On the Waterfront*. Teachers may refer their students to the websites listed in the 'References, Resources and Supplementary Texts' section for further research.

## Hoboken

- Ask students what they know of the greater New York area.
- Ask them to check Google Maps to see the shape of the maps of the states of New York and New Jersey.
- Ask them to locate Hoboken, Manhattan, the Hudson River, the Empire State Building, the site of the World Trade Centre, the Brooklyn Bridge, the five New York boroughs and Greenpoint, where Slim the cigar smoking thug comes from.
- Students could measure the distance to Manhattan from Hoboken across the Hudson River and the distance from Manhattan to Brooklyn, to get an idea of the actual size of Greater New York and New Jersey.
- Ask students to type in 'Hoboken' into a Google search and find images of the contemporary Hoboken waterfront. How has it changed since the era of the film?

## Unions

- Ask students what they know about Trade Unions – in particular, their history, their primary purpose for existence and the waterfront unions in Australia.
- Students could briefly research the Royal Commission into the Ships' Painters and Dockers Union. In the process they could discover what a Royal Commission is and what powers it has. By comparison, they could research the powers of a Grand Jury in the USA.

## Creating the Film

- Students could watch a number of YouTube presentations on Marlon Brando. What type of roles did he play and how might these inform your understanding of the role he plays in *On the Waterfront*?
- Students could divide into small groups to research the careers of Elia Kazan, Karl Malden, Lee J. Cobb, Eva Marie Saint, Leonard Bernstein and Bud Schulberg.
- Students could discuss films that they are familiar with to define the different roles of the director, screenwriter, actors, etc, in creating the total effect of the film. A class list could be made of films in which the direction seems more important, films where the acting dominates, etc.
- Students could research the nature and origin of 'method acting'. In particular, they could watch the power point presentation on Stanislavski's approach to acting at *Using The Stanislavski Method to Create a Performance*,

<http://www.slideshare.net/jsamarro/using-the-stanislavski-method-to-create-a-performance-presentation> (last accessed 10 May 2009).

- In particular, students could reflect on the idea of a 'back story,' and when viewing the film look for parts where an actor might well employ this technique.

## Introducing the Film

- Students could research boxing: the weight categories (Terry was 168 pounds or about 77 kilos in his prime); the types of punches; Madison Square Garden; the role of the referee.
- Ask students to discuss how groups pressure members to conform. Students could discuss in ways in which they conform; and when, or if, they resist the pressure to conform. Perhaps students could write about a time when they were either 'D and D' or a 'Canary', and how the experience felt to them. They could reflect on the role of sanctions in the groups they belong to.
- Using the class as resource, compile a booklet on the Roman Catholic Church: its doctrines, its connection to the Irish and Italian people, the role of a parish priest, what a 'parish' is, Confession, Mass, Extreme Unction, the nature of sacraments, the sign of the cross, beliefs about the Crucifixion, nuns, catholic education. What is faith? What is a saint? What was the significance of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Catholic dogma? What is a relic? What is an icon? What is 'the sacred heart of Jesus?' Find images of Jesus, Mary and the saints on the internet.
- Ask students how important religion is in their lives. Discuss how they understand the terms 'good' and 'evil', and if they use such terms in their daily lives. Ask them about how important the idea of conscience is when they decide how to behave.
- Type 'On+the+waterfront+review+new+york+times' into Google to get the 1954 review of the film. This is an impressive review and is a good way to begin a discussion. After studying the review students could discuss whether there were issues or aspects of the film that were not noticed by the reviewer that would be obvious to a twenty-first century audience.
- Students could collect a number of reviews on the film and rank them in order of preference, explaining their reasons for the ranking they have given.

## A PERSPECTIVE ON THE TEXT

As the title of the film suggests, *On the Waterfront* is a film about a particular location, a place different from the rest of America. Elia Kazan sets himself the task of creating an enclosed, harsh, frighteningly unpredictable world where good and evil are clearly recognisable, where they are objectified, palpable and unmistakeable. It is a world where moral doubt and moral complexity have no place. A story is constructed in which the main protagonist comes to realise what the audience realises from the start, takes action, becomes free and frees others. The ending is cathartic. Any doubts about the plausibility of the ending are lost in the feeling of triumph as Terry becomes a hero and the men follow him to work.

*On the Waterfront* tells the story of the emotional and moral growth of Terry Malloy: how he becomes someone who can 'speak the truth as he knows it' and who can get his rights. Terry's story is a story of someone becoming an independent individual. Using the full range of cinematic devices, Kazan deeply engages the audience's sympathy for Terry's struggle, thus preparing us to accept uncritically a very conservative view of society and an idealistic view of the USA.

Elia Kazan creates the world of the waterfront as a world of evil. It is a bitterly cold world of confrontations, challenges and threats; a world of impassive faces, of dark passageways and alleys; a world of shadows, of harshness, of a woman shouting about 'when they came to get my Andy'. The angled camera shots – inside and outside Friendly's bar, the shots up and down the alleyway at the time of Charlie's death, inside the local and down into the hold of the ship – give the audience a sense of peering into murky depths to look at evil, peering, like Terry does as he struggles to make out the hanging body of his murdered brother. In scene after scene, motionless, impassive faces stare out at Terry: inside the bar, at the 'Shape Up', at the wedding dance. This is an enclosed world. Kazan shows America in the form of Manhattan with The Empire State Building far off in the smoky distance.

In this world, 'natural', furious reactions to outrageous events do not occur. When Joey Doyle is thrown off the roof life goes on as if nothing has happened. The thugs behind the murder joke that, as a 'canary', 'he could sing but he couldn't fly'. Joey's fellow workers accept that nothing can be done. His own father turns up for work the next day, resigned to paying for the funeral, resigned to 'reality'.

We see this reality in Johnny Friendly's bar. The camera takes us into a murky den, full of blank faces. Out of the bowels of the adjoining room, we follow a barman then Big Mac as they walk towards Friendly who moves towards the camera. We are up close to the 'big man', the ruthless union boss, who does his corrupt business at all hours, who manhandles his underlings and buys off Terry's scruples with fifty dollars and a cushy job. Friendly and Charlie spell out an explicit justification for the murder:

Friendly: '... you don't suppose I can afford to be forced out of a deal like this, do you? A deal I sweated and bled for on account of one lousy little cheese eater, that Doyle bum who thinks he can go squealin' to the crime commission do ya?'

Friendly's self-serving moral argument admits no dissenting reply, but opposing views are articulated throughout the film. Friendly's morality is set against that of Edie Doyle and Father Barry. Edie, innocent, virginal, fresh from the convent, comes face to face with evil for the first time. Her distress at Joey's death and her indignant challenge to Father Barry, 'whoever heard of a saint hiding in a church?', is spontaneous and passionate. Edie's outrage galvanises Barry to think anew about his role in his parish. His acknowledgement to Edie at the wharf during the 'Shape



Up' establishes both of them as moral agents, and enables him to speak with authority, re-enlivening traditional Christian vocabulary with his passion. Edie is able to inspire others, while Barry is more than a 'gravy train rider with a turned around collar'. He speaks both of moral and political rights in the same breath so that traditional Christian morality is aligned in our minds as identical with the political and civil rights in the USA: 'there's one thing we got in this country and that's ways of fightin' back'.

Explicit moral assertions abound in this film. Throughout the film, Terry is given 'guidance', both good and bad. Charlie tells him, 'Johnny wants a favour, don't even think about it'; Edie says to him, 'shouldn't everyone be interested in everybody else?'; Charlie comments that 'It's an unhealthy relationship'; Terry himself advises to 'do it to him before he does it to you'; and Barry notes, 'You've got a whole lot of other brothers...'. Kazan gives Edie, Barry and the two Crime Commission Investigators the role of expressing alternative moral values to those put forward by Terry, Charlie, Friendly and his criminals. Whereas the first Commissioner speaks to Terry politely and courteously, explaining and encouraging, the second Commissioner is stern and direct: 'what we want from you, Mr. Malloy is to tell the truth'.

The second Commissioner's challenges are amplified by those of Father Barry when he challenges Terry outside the church and inside Friendly's bar after the death of Charlie:

'You fight him in the court room tomorrow with the truth, as you know the truth'. Father Barry's punch is the physical embodiment of his direct moral challenge. A punch is 'language' that Terry understands.

The struggles of Terry Malloy are at the heart of *On the Waterfront* and Kazan depends on our acceptance of the worth of this struggle to convince us of the morality of 'rattin' on his friends'. The film portrays Terry's internal conflict externally, through the faces that stare at him: the evil faces of the underlings in the bar; two of the mob staring as he talks to the Commissioners; the faces of the mob suddenly emerging from the darkness at the wedding; and the face of Tullio staring as Johnny and Charlie berate him in the railway yard. The hard faces in these scenes are balanced by the faces of Edie, Father Barry, Jimmy Collins and the others at the Commission hearing; the face of the second Crime Commissioner at the wedding; and the faces of Father Barry, the workers, and the statues of Jesus and the saints at the church; the image of the cross in the hold; and that of Barry, Pop and the body of Dugan rising from the hold.

Terry's struggles are firstly, to acknowledge what he knows in his heart is the truth about Friendly and Charlie, and then, to take steps to act on this knowledge. Terry is presented as someone who is 'natural', not corrupted like Friendly, or morally lost, like Charlie, but as someone who is oppressed and who lacks the ability to reflect on and articulate his misery. His upbringing in the orphanage and his dependence on his brother have not corrupted his essential self as his first moments with Edie show. His natural home is the roof with the pigeons, his natural friends the Golden Warriors. On the roof he and the boys move like cats, and as he begins to understand the truth he is shown moving and fighting with sureness and even elegance. His rescue of Edie in the church, his neat despatch of Tullio in the hold of the ship and his final clinical destruction of Friendly are key moments in the emergence of the real Terry.

The film endorses fatherless Terry's natural responses. His despatch of Tullio in the hold receives loving gratitude from Edie. His response to the first commissioner's

gentle probing about the fight is a reliving of a past event that enables him to express out loud the truth about Friendly and Charlie. His violent invasion of the Doyle's tenement is presented as an expression of his natural masculinity, and as intuitive knowledge of the reality of his relationship with Edie that she rewards with an emotional and sexual surrender. His determination to 'take it out on their skulls' is seen as superior to Edie's frightened plea to run away from the evil that surrounds them. Terry is positioned by the script, by the visual images and also simply by the towering performance of Brando, as being naturally good.

Terry's lack of words is central to his character, and central to his rhetorical impact. At the Crime Commission hearing he does not even know how to take an oath. He lacks any knowledge of register – he speaks as a child does, the same to everyone. This lack of sophistication is a guarantee of his sincerity. Unlike Friendly, Charlie and the 'banker' J.P., he cannot use words hypocritically. He does not possess the tough wit of K.O. Dugan, who says to J.P., 'Why don't you drop dead now, so we can test your theory?'

What he does manage to achieve are expressions of the 'simple truth': expressions like 'you was my brudder Charlie, you should have looked out for me a little bit'; and 'it was you'. Delivered by Brando, such lines have a cleansing moral force, have the power to enable Charlie to see the truth of his past, and are the signal that Terry himself is becoming both himself, and an agent for goodness at last.

In *On the Waterfront*, the truth is simple, and good and evil are easily recognisable. The story of Terry Malloy is constructed so his personal growth is made inseparable from his realisation of the reality of good and evil. The death of Charlie and the killing of the pigeons signify the end of Terry's boyhood. Tommy's weeping, while poignant, has the effect of making gang loyalty seem the province of a child. Terry now 'puts away childish things'. As he looks at the Hudson River and sees a giant ship leaving harbour, he grasps his hook, takes Joey's jacket and goes to claim his rights as an American. In confronting the gang without fear, he is now a moral force, and can find the words that liberate him from the moral trap his brother placed him in. The other workers, symbolised by Jimmy Collins are too timid and need to be led. Acting like a real father, Barry, who represents both moral and civil order, sternly encourages Terry to independently 'win the war'. Unlike the other workers, who are too cowardly to come to his aid when attacked, Terry fights against physical pain and the hysterical pleas of Edie to claim his rights. A single individual restores order as he limps towards the tall dignified shipowner, an image of American achievement. America can go back to work.

# RUNNING SHEET

Scene selection	Time	Description
Titles	0	
The set up.	1.27	<p>Friendly sends Terry on his way to Joey.</p> <p>Terry calls out to Joey and says he will meet him on the roof.</p> <p>Two figures are seen on the roof.</p> <p>Terry releases the bird.</p>
'I think somebody fell off the roof.'	2.53	<p>Joey Doyle falls off the roof.</p> <p>Terry's distress contrasted with the brutal jokes of the thugs.</p> <p>Edie's outrage at the death of Joey.</p>
Johnny Friendly's bar.	5.48	<p>Demonstration of Friendly's power and his justification for killing Joey.</p> <p>Attempted corruption of Terry.</p> <p>Charlie's anxiety for Terry explaining his own behaviour.</p> <p>Terry visits the pigeon coop, shows his distress.</p>
Waterfront.	12.52	<p>Terry confronted by Waterfront commission officers.</p> <p>Pop and Dugan show contempt for the Banker.</p> <p>Edie apologies to Father Barry.</p> <p>He tells her: 'this is my parish.'</p> <p>Workers tormented by Mac, and fight for work tabs.</p> <p>Edie wrestles with Terry.</p> <p>He gives her a tab.</p>
Bonding.	17.41	<p>Father Barry asks about the union.</p> <p>He is told that union bosses eliminate competition.</p> <p>Offers to hold a meeting at the church.</p>
Meeting at the church.	19.19	<p>Terry told to go to the meeting.</p> <p>Father Barry sees their situation in simple moral terms and challenges them to take a</p>

		<p>risk.</p> <p>Dugan explains 'D and D'.</p> <p>Father Barry reminds them of the American justice system and challenges their language redefining 'ratting' as 'telling the truth'.</p>
Attack on the church.	23.10	<p>Rock thrown through the church window.</p> <p>Workers panic, attacked as they leave.</p> <p>Terry saves Edie.</p> <p>Dugan angered by attack and decides to stand up.</p> <p>Father Barry promises to stand by him to the end.</p>
A walk in the park.	25.03	<p>Rummy recognises Edie.</p> <p>Rummy is bullied by Terry.</p> <p>Terry questions Edie about herself.</p> <p>Terry makes a joke about how Edie looked as a child, then compliments her.</p> <p>They reminisce about Terry at school.</p> <p>He charms her and asks if he'll see her again.</p>
Edie's home.	29.45	<p>Pop wants to send Edie back to the Nuns.</p> <p>Edie tells Pop that Terry wants to see her again and lets out her hair.</p> <p>Pop's frightened for Edie because he thinks that Terry is trouble.</p> <p>Pop tells Edie how hard he's had to work to protect her and give her a better life than he had.</p> <p>Edie no longer wants to be protected.</p>
Edie comes to the pigeon coop.	32.00	<p>Edie comes to the pigeon coop.</p> <p>Terry tells her about the Golden warriors and reveals his sensitive self.</p> <p>Terry asks Edie to have a glass of beer with him.</p>
The saloon.	36.06	<p>Edie asks Terry about his fighting.</p> <p>He tells Edie about his childhood and how he got involved with Johnny Friendly.</p> <p>Terry is trying hard to get closer to her.</p>



		<p>Edie provokes Terry to tell her his philosophy of life.</p> <p>Terry tries to distract her from her distress. She asks him for help. He tries to comfort her. She leaves, he is dismayed.</p>
The wedding.	41.25	<p>Edie is distressed by the boisterous wedding party.</p> <p>She's feeling a little tipsy.</p> <p>Terry asks her to dance.</p> <p>They're having a good time when one of Friendly's goons tells Terry that the boss wants to see him.</p> <p>Edie challenges Terry and he warns her against asking questions.</p> <p>Terry receives a subpoena.</p> <p>Edie asks if it was Friendly who killed Joey, and Terry tells her to worry about herself.</p>
Friendly's angry.	46.08	<p>Friendly and Charlie find Terry.</p> <p>They tell him Dugan has spoken to the Crime Commission.</p> <p>Friendly speaks about Terry to Charlie with contempt.</p> <p>Charlie remonstrates with Terry.</p> <p>Friendly tells Terry he's going back in the hole.</p>
The death of Dugan.	48.32	<p>Friendly signals to Tullio who signals to Big Mac.</p> <p>Terry tries to speak to Dugan but is rejected.</p> <p>Big Mac drops a load on Dugan, killing him.</p>
Father Barry's sermon.	50.22	<p>Father Barry decides to speak out.</p> <p>Father Barry claims that the murder of Dugan is a crucifixion and those who keep silent are just as guilty as the murderers.</p> <p>He gets pelted with rubbish.</p> <p>Terry punches Tullio to stop him from throwing rubbish.</p> <p>Terry's action is noticed by Edie and</p>

		<p>Friendly.</p> <p>Edie is given Joey's jacket back, and looks at Terry with love in her eyes.</p> <p>Father smokes a cigarette as he, Pop and Dugan's body are raised out of the hold.</p> <p>Up on the roof Edie gives Terry Joey's jacket, and they kiss for the first time.</p>
The confession.	56.36	<p>Terry tries to speak to Father Barry but Father Barry walks off on him three times.</p> <p>He tells Father Barry he set up Joey.</p> <p>He says he tried to tell Edie but couldn't.</p> <p>Terry explains why he can't testify.</p> <p>Father Barry brushes his objections aside and walks away saying Terry must listen to his conscience.</p> <p>Father Barry convinces Terry to tell Edie the truth.</p>
Terry tells Edie.	1:00.16	<p>Terry tells Edie while the whistle screams, Edie runs away.</p>
Crime Commission investigator on the roof; Friendly's interrogation of Charlie.	1:01.04	<p>Golden warriors see Crime Commission Investigator talking to Terry.</p> <p>He induces Terry to talk about his most important fight.</p> <p>Terry relives the fight and manages to express the truth about it to himself.</p> <p>Friendly interrogates Charlie and tells him to kill Terry if he needs to.</p>
Inside the cab.	1:07.37	<p>Terry says he needs to talk to Charlie.</p> <p>Charlie tells Terry he should be thinking about the future, Terry rejects the idea.</p> <p>Charlie offers him a lucrative job, telling him he mustn't speak to anybody.</p> <p>Terry can't agree, saying he wants to talk to Charlie about it.</p> <p>Charlie becomes angry and reminds him how much they all have to lose.</p> <p>Charlie loses his temper and Terry begins to realise he's being threatened.</p> <p>Charlie pulls a gun, Terry is disappointed and disillusioned.</p>

		<p>Charlie begs Terry to take the job but is shamed by Terry's response.</p> <p>Charlie tries to talk to Terry about his boxing career.</p> <p>Terry confronts Charlie with the truth of his betrayal and expresses his sorrow at what he's lost.</p> <p>Charlie offers Terry his gun.</p> <p>Terry gets out of the cab.</p> <p>Charlie is driven straight into a trap.</p>
Edie's apartment.	1:13.15	<p>Terry comes to the door.</p> <p>Edie tells him to go away.</p> <p>He breaks down the door.</p> <p>In a heated exchange they kiss.</p> <p>Voices are heard outside calling him.</p> <p>Terry goes to find Charlie, Edie follows.</p> <p>They race down an alley and narrowly avoid being killed.</p>
The death of Charlie.	1:16.36	<p>Terry sees Charlie dead, hanging from a hook.</p> <p>Terry takes the body down, tells Edie to get Father Barry, and goes after revenge.</p>
Friendly's bar.	1:18.48	<p>Terry walks into the bar with Charlie's gun, looking for Friendly.</p> <p>Tullio enters the bar.</p> <p>Father Barry enters and tries to get the gun from Terry.</p> <p>Father Barry punches Terry and everyone in the bar escapes.</p> <p>Father Barry challenges Terry to testify.</p> <p>Father Barry has a beer with Terry.</p> <p>Terry throws his gun at a photo of Friendly.</p>
Crime Commission.	1:23.13	<p>At the commission, Big Mac lies under oath.</p> <p>Terry is called to testify.</p> <p>He seems inarticulate on the stand.</p> <p>Mr 'Upstairs' tells Butler to ignore calls from Friendly.</p>

		<p>Attorney congratulates Terry.</p> <p>Friendly is called to the stand and threatens Terry.</p> <p>Terry is followed home by police and ignored by a friend.</p> <p>Edie pleads with Terry to leave the waterfront.</p>
End of the Golden Warriors and the waterfront.	1:28.22	<p>Terry goes to the roof.</p> <p>Tommy, weeping, screams at Terry and throws a dead pigeon at him.</p> <p>Terry discovers all his pigeons have been killed.</p> <p>Edie joins him on the roof.</p> <p>She begs him to leave.</p> <p>Terry tells Edie he's not a bum and he's going to work to get his rights.</p> <p>The workers don't speak to Terry because he's a 'canary'.</p> <p>Friendly claims he'll personally take revenge on Terry.</p> <p>Terry is left alone on the wharf.</p> <p>Friendly, worried that he'll be executed, takes guns from his men and hides them.</p>
Terry's declaration.	1:34.14	<p>Terry walks down to the union hut followed by Pop and the men.</p> <p>He calls Friendly out and belittles Friendly in front of the men.</p> <p>Friendly challenges him.</p>
The fight.	1:35.53	<p>Terry and Friendly fight.</p> <p>Terry gains the upper hand.</p> <p>Friendly calls his thugs to intervene and they assault Terry.</p> <p>The workers arrive to help Terry.</p> <p>They are cowered by Friendly's thugs, and defeat is shown on their faces.</p> <p>Father Barry and Edie arrive.</p> <p>Friendly emerges bloodied.</p> <p>Father Barry and Edie go to help Terry.</p> <p>The ship owner arrives, and tells Friendly</p>



		<p>to start loading.</p> <p>Friendly tells the men to start working but the men won't listen to him.</p> <p>Pop pushes Friendly in to the river.</p>
The walk.	1:39.19	<p>The men want Terry to lead them in to the dock.</p> <p>Father Barry understands that this is a critical moment, and he challenges Terry to walk in.</p> <p>Terry struggles to his feet.</p> <p>Father Barry tells him to finish what he started.</p> <p>Terry walks in through the men.</p> <p>They all follow Terry and ignore Friendly.</p> <p>Tullio and Truck walk away from Friendly.</p>

# CHARACTERS

## Terry Malloy

Terry Malloy, 'the kid brother of Charlie the Gent', is an ex-boxer whose career has been ruined by his brother and Johnny Friendly. When Terry Malloy discovers that he has been the decoy used to lure Joey Doyle to his death, he is distressed but cannot put words to what he feels. His natural loyalty to his brother and his fear of the mob render him incapable of fully acknowledging what he has done and of freely expressing the anger he feels. Terry is inarticulate, has no moral vocabulary and has neither the cast of mind nor the education, to reflect on what he has done or his terrible situation. All he can do is envy his pigeons their freedom and carefree life. When confronted by the investigators at the 'Shape Up' he is hostile and uncooperative, seeing them through the values of the waterfront as enemies.

In his first meeting with Edie, we see a different Terry – playful, athletic, humorous and compassionate. The mumbling 'ex tanker' is light, graceful and street-wise. His rescuing of Edie in the church and his subsequent conversation with her, show us more. While awkward in speech and manner, Terry is revealed as gentlemanly, courteous and attractive. His conversation with Edie is halting, but disarmingly natural. When he invites her to see his pigeons, we are seeing his inner self – utterly gentle and affectionate. His joy in her acceptance of his invitation is symbolised by the sudden release of the pigeon in his hands.

Yet he is still troubled. His philosophy, 'do it to him before he does it to you', alienates Edie; and his attempt to rescue his date ends in disaster with her passionate and contemptuous rejection of him. The emptiness he feels is symbolised by the dissolve from his anguished face to the deserted railway yard where he is bullied and humiliated by Friendly and Charlie.

It takes the death of K.O. Dugan and the passionately confronting 'sermon in the hold' to give Terry the impetus to act.

Terry now comes under the influence of two older men who, each in his own way, show him the road to self-respect. By judicious questioning, the tall crime commissioner is able to get Terry to recount the story of his big fight. As he does, Terry makes explicit for himself the truth of his mistreatment by Friendly and Charlie, and when Charlie threatens him in the cab, he is able to say the truth to his brother: 'It was you, Charlie!' Father Barry's approach is less gentle. When Terry discovers the body of Charlie and fully realises the evil of the mob, Barry confronts him, speaking to him like a stern father. Barry absorbs Terry's rage and even punches him when Terry tells him to go to hell. Barry's 'tough love' allows Terry to think clearly about how best to take revenge on Friendly.

Terry's appearance and testimony at the Crime Commission cut him off from the mob; his friends, even Tommy, who, broken-hearted by Terry's transgression of the code, kills his pigeons. Paradoxically, he is freed from his past. Ignoring appeals from Edie, he goes to the 'Shape Up' to get his rights as a worker. When he is denied these rights, he confronts Johnny Friendly and, for the first time, is able to speak out against his oppressors. Free of fear, he can see he was 'rattin' on myself all these years and I didn't even know it'. More importantly, he can say it to himself and everyone else.

## Questions

- When Terry grabs Edie and forcefully kisses her, how are we meant to interpret this?
- What purpose does the presence of the Golden Warriors serve in the film?
- How does Terry describe his conscience? What does this tell us about him?
- Describe what happens to Terry as he tells the story of his big fight.
- Why does Father Barry punch Terry? What is the significance of the punch?

## Edie Doyle

Edie Doyle is the daughter of Pop Doyle and the sister of Joey Doyle, the man thrown off the roof. Edie's anger is the moral touchstone of the film. After Joey's death Edie is the only person who speaks out the anger that everyone feels, but cannot utter. She sees the evil and responds in a natural uncomplicated way. Her indignant retort to Father Barry, 'Did you ever hear of a saint hiding in a church?', is a moral challenge to him. It is an attack on timidity and it provides a spur to action for Father Barry.

Edie's passion is also seen at the 'Shape Up' when, heedless of danger, she tries to get a work tab so her father can earn a day's pay. She is pulled out of danger by Father Barry and then gets into a fight with Terry, slapping his face as he playfully holds her back. She tells her father that she cannot return to a life of books, but is determined to find Joey's killer.

Edie, who has been sheltered from the waterfront, has also been sheltered from contact with men. In the scene where Terry takes Edie's glove, and in the scene where Terry shows her his pigeons, Edie is shown as completely unschooled in the game of love. When Terry asks if he can see her again, she naively asks, 'What for?'. When Terry asks her to have a glass of beer with him, she can barely speak her assent. During the dance scene, Terry literally sweeps her off her feet – as she says she is 'floating, just floating'. This Hoboken *Romeo and Juliet* moment is shattered by the interruption of the giant Barney as the lights go on and we see the two are dancing close to Truck and Big Mac. The simple wedding is a mob celebration. Terry's predicament is suddenly revealed to her. Beset by contradictory emotions, she judges Terry mercilessly. Her distress gets the better of her and she runs away.

After this moment in the film, as Terry rises to face challenge after challenge, her role becomes that of a spectator to the main events: her role as an agent in the film collapses. After acknowledging her love for Terry, she turns into a woman who yearns for peace, whose emotions do not allow her to grasp the full significance of what Terry must face. She runs away when Terry tells her of his involvement with Joey's death; on seeing Charlie's corpse, she wants them to run away; after the hearing, she encourages Terry to leave the waterfront and seek a new life elsewhere; and, when Terry needs to walk out to show leadership to the men, she does not understand and tries to stop him.

Even though we see moral and sexual development in Edie, her role in *On the Waterfront* is not so much to act independently as to articulate moral principles and to embody goodness: she inspires Father Barry; Terry wants to do the right thing because 'she is the first decent thing that's ever happened to me'. In the beer scene, she disarms Terry by saying 'isn't everybody a part of everyone else?' When Terry asks her if she believes that 'drivel' she says quietly, 'Yes I do'.

Edie has a credo that she lives by and that she can articulate. She is, as Terry says, decent. Her distress over the death of her brother presents Terry with an unexpected challenge, to act independently and morally for the first time.

### Questions

- Why is Terry's admission that he set up Joey's murder, so painful for Edie?
- Why is Edie's petticoat visible as she runs after Terry as he looks for Charlie?
- What do we learn about Edie's state of mind from her clothes and hair?
- Why, in the wedding scene, does she run away from Terry?

### Father Barry

Father Barry is a priest who realises that just fulfilling his liturgical role is not enough for the people on the waterfront. He articulates a moral interpretation of the events on the waterfront, providing an example of how to respond to the outrageous events, even stronger than Edie's.

Kazan's problem is how to make Father Barry, a character whose normal role in society is to retire from the world, a credible participant in these events, and one whose moral pronouncements are to be listened to. Barry becomes credible when he responds to Edie's blistering attack after the death of Joey. He takes what she says seriously, leaves his church and comes to the waterfront. He is indignant at Big Mac's treatment of the men in the 'Shape Up' and backs his indignation with an offer to the men to use the church for a meeting.

In asking for a cigarette from Dugan, Barry identifies himself as one of the men. This priest is a man who feels strongly and, like Dugan, is not afraid to publicly own how he feels. Unlike his fellow priest in the church, Barry expresses his loyalty to the workers, helps them escape, manhandles the thugs and swears to support Dugan all the way 'down the line' if he testifies against the mob. Father Barry is acting not as a member of a church, but as an individual. His moral and political pronouncements have the pressure of personal conviction behind them, not the weight of tradition.

His 'sermon in the hold', full of outrage, is the antithesis of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Instead of telling the meek that they shall inherit the earth, Barry gives a speech intended to rouse the men to action. Standing in the hold, his face bleeding from being pelted with rubbish – just as Jesus was pelted on his way to Calvary – he attacks the mob, calling on the men to remember that each man is his brother in Christ and that Jesus is in the hold with them. He adroitly uses the present tragedy to give a new meaning to Jesus' words: 'if you do it to the least of mine, you do it to me'. This is a world view very similar to that of Edie's, as expressed in the bar. As the tray carrying the body of Dugan, Pop and Barry rises out of the hold, Pop hands him a cigarette, just as Dugan did. Father Barry has earned respect and a new authority.

As Terry begins to change, he comes to Father Barry for guidance. What he gets is no gentle ministry, but powerful anger, contempt and challenge. Barry's role in the film now changes from one of speaking out to that approximating a very stern parent. He is utterly direct, challenging and even punches Terry for insulting him. At the end, he gets Terry to stand and to walk, both literally and metaphorically, on his own feet. Barry gives Terry the 'tough love' he never received from Charlie.



## Questions

- Why is there a second priest in the film?
- The second priest wears a cassock. Why has the director chosen to dress him in this way?
- Why is it significant that Father Barry refuses to hear Terry's confession?
- When Barry approaches Terry in the bar, he says: 'Now don't give me a hard time'. How would you describe this way of speaking to Terry? Is it normal to approach a man with a gun like this?
- Why does Edie put her head on Father Barry's shoulder at the end of the film?

## Charlie the Gent

Charlie Malloy is Terry's brother and Johnny Friendly's second-in-charge. Pop Doyle calls him 'the butcher in a camel hair coat'. The film identifies him as part of the mob. In the scene outside Friendly's bar he stands against the wall with Tullio and Truck, silent, buttoned up and impassive.

Charlie's clothes seem both to define and contain him. Charlie is never seen without his coat on, even in death. Underneath the coat is a troubled man. He is under no illusions about Friendly but from time to time speaks as if he is trying to convince himself of the rightness of Friendly's activities: 'Why shouldn't we, if we can get it? We're entitled to it'; and, 'You've got a real friend here, don't forget it'.

Unlike Tullio and Truck, who brush aside Terry's feelings at the death of Joey Doyle, Charlie makes a half hearted attempt to comfort Terry. He clearly loves his brother but every time he is forced to defend him, his explanations become more strained. In the 'investigation' in the local, Friendly sets out to destroy any lingering notion that Charlie may have that his boss is a 'real friend'. As the ground shifts under Charlie, he is forced to declare his loyalty for Terry and then is trapped. When he threatens Terry in the cab, he is caught in an impossible dilemma. Terry's refusal to be frightened awakens Charlie's love for him, and his comment, '...it was you Charlie', renders Charlie helpless to do anything but let him go. The residue of goodness in Charlie is responsible for his death.

## Questions

- What do the bullet holes in Charlie's coat suggest about the way he was killed?
- What evidence is there that Charlie is looking out for Terry?
- What evidence is there that Charlie went to college?
- Does Pop's description of Charlie match our experience of him?

## Johnny Friendly

Friendly controls the waterfront and the lives of thousands of people. Physically imposing, moody, unpredictable, by turns friendly and menacing, he frightens everyone who comes in contact with him.

His ruthlessness and vicious nature is uncovered more with each scene in which he appears. He is strong enough to pick up Terry off the floor, and his contemptuous slapping around of one of his underlings reveals him as someone accustomed to using violence and the display of violence to get his own way. No less a personage

than Big Mac, the tormenting bully of the 'Shape Up', approaches him with exaggerated deference.

As Father Barry says in the hold of the ship where K.O. Dugan is murdered, although Friendly wears 'a hundred and fifty dollar suits and diamond rings' he is essentially, as Terry says, 'a cheap, lousy, dirty stinkin' mug'.

In his bar he is seen with his coat undone, his tie crooked, buttons undone, the collar turning up. We are being shown in this instance that clothes do not 'maketh the man'. He is a bully.

Friendly is a bully who is skilled and practised in humiliation. In the scene where Friendly and Charlie find Terry and berate him for not reporting on Dugan's decision to testify, Friendly shames Terry while using Terry's misdemeanour to put the heat on Charlie. He begins with the same act of friendship he performed in the bar, but showing himself as the bully he is, he turns on Terry, abusing him. Suddenly, Friendly dismisses him, by talking to Charlie in front of him, knowing Charlie is becoming increasingly uncomfortable. He ends the interview by viciously pinching Terry's face and slapping him, a gesture of dominance and contempt.

Friendly's interrogation of Charlie in the 'local' reveals him to be a ruthless and sadistic leader, who understands the theatre of interrogation. The scene begins with Friendly's feet on the desk near Charlie's face. This gesture of dominance is calculated to unnerve Charlie as Friendly 'conducts this investigation'. As he is dealing with 'a brainy guy', Friendly employs sarcasm and mimicry. 'Thanks for the legal advice Charlie, that's what we always kept you around here for.' 'How do we keep him from giving this testimony? Ain't that what you call the main order of business?' Friendly's underlings, apart from Big Mac, look away from Charlie. Their faces like masks, they intently study their form guides as if nothing is happening. Friendly moves from sarcasm and mimicry to plain vernacular: 'I ain't interested in his mental condition. All I want to know, is he D and D or is he a canary?'

Friendly's complete ruthlessness is seen in his ultimatum to Charlie, to neutralise Terry or to have him killed. His parting comment, 'On your horse, deep thinker', is accompanied by a sadistic smile. Charlie has not just been 'investigated,' he has been broken.

## Minor Characters

### K.O. Dugan, Pop Doyle, Jimmy Collins

These characters represent the good ordinary workers who suffer the intimidation and injustice of the corrupt union. All three speak about injustice among themselves but feel unable to effect any change.

### K.O. Dugan

K.O Dugan is a warm-hearted, tough New Yorker who has been a longshoreman for thirty years. K.O. is independent and courageous, with a grim, sardonic sense of humour. He makes wisecracks to Tullio and Truck. When J.P., Friendly's banker, hypocritically says to Pop 'When I'm dead and gone, you'll know what a friend I've been,' Dugan replies, 'Why don't you drop dead now so we can test your theory?' Even after he has been assaulted in the church, his humour is unabated: '...considerin' they were usin' my head for a baseball'.

Unlike Terry Malloy, he can speak the truth as he sees it. Dugan sarcastically spells out the terms of the corrupt loans: 'Some chance. Ten percent a week and if we don't pay we don't work'.

## Questions

- Why does Dugan decide to testify? Is it because he is angry that he was hurt, or is there some other reason?

## Pop

Pop, the father of Joey and Edie, has worked on the waterfront all his life. Not being able to change his circumstances, he has resigned himself to reality. He goes to work the day after his son's murder to pay for the funeral. In the poignant scene where he shows his damaged arms to Edie and makes a desperate appeal for her to return to the convent, we gain a stark picture of his life as one of drudgery and sacrifice.

Like Dugan, Pop sees the evil and injustice on the waterfront with a grim humour. There is clearly a bond between Dugan and Pop because Pop offers him Joey's windbreaker, after his death. When K.O. longs for a ship with Irish whisky to unload, Pop says, with an Irish inflection, 'Dugan me boy, you're dreamin' again'. This moment of light relief in the 'Shape Up' with both heads in the same frame, marks Pop with Dugan as two tough Irish-Americans who share a common past and who deserve better.

Similar to Dugan, Pop can sometimes speak the truth as he perceives it and is prepared to fight no matter the personal cost. For instance, when talking to Edie, he refers to Charlie as 'a butcher in a camel haired coat'; and when the thugs throw rubbish at Father Barry in the hold he threatens them; and when Big Mac tosses the tabs onto the wharf, he dives in to the chaos, heedless of danger. Later, when Father Barry tosses him aside for his own safety, he is furious at being robbed of the opportunity to work and to pay for his own son's funeral. When Pop pushes Friendly in to the water, he takes revenge, both for his son's death, and for thirty years of humiliation on the docks.

## Questions

- Why is Pop given the words, 'he don't need a doctor, he needs a priest'?
- Why does the director place Pop on the tray that lifts Dugan's body out of the hold?
- Why does the director choose Pop to push Friendly into the river?

## Jimmy Collins

At the 'Shape Up', Jimmy appears with Dugan and Pop. Like them, he suffers, but he lacks courage. When Edie challenges him in the church that he was Joey's best friend, his reply

'But what do you want me to do?' are the same words that Terry uses when Edie challenges him. The question is rhetorical. It is as if both Jimmy and Terry are saying that they cannot be expected to do any more. Jimmy's courage fails him when, in the last scene when Terry is attacked by the thugs and Edie tries to push past Tullio to get to Terry. Jimmy needs to follow – he wants to be led.

## Question

- Jimmy Collins is a minor character in the film. He is not crucial to the development of the plot. Why is he there?

## Big Mac

Big Mac is the 'fix it' man – that is, Friendly's intermediary between himself and the ship owners – the one who looks for 'business' opportunities and the one who decides who will work and where they will work. Wary of his boss, he fears no one else except his wife. He humiliates Terry to entertain the thugs. Openly sadistic to the men, he holds back the work tabs till they can bear it no more, then he throws the tabs to ensure that the desperate men will fight each other. He coolly supervises the murder of K.O. Dugan and lies so brazenly in the Crime Commission that the courtroom cannot resist laughing – his complete contempt for the proceedings is obvious to all.

### Questions

- From which angles does the camera shoot Big Mac in the 'Shape Up'? What physical features does the camera highlight?
- What does Big Mac do when handing out the tabs? Describe his actions.
- How does Big Mac react when mentioned by Father Barry during his sermon over the body of Dugan?

## Tullio and Truck

Tullio, who mostly dresses in black, and Truck, who wears a hat and continuously smokes a cigar, appear together most of the time. They speak in one and two word sentences in pejorative labels and clichés: 'wise guy', 'big mouth', 'meatballs', 'canary', 'definitely'.

Whereas Truck has the wit to make the canary joke about Joey Doyle, Tullio is particularly chilling because it seems his personality is wholly submerged in his role as 'muscle'. His expressive capacities are limited to derisive laughter, threats and name-calling. His utterances come from a mind unencumbered by any awareness of the humanity of other people. At the end they walk away from the deserted Johnny Friendly.

### Question

- Why did the director decide that both Tullio and Truck would say the word 'definitely' at different points in the film?

# ISSUES AND THEMES

## The Moral and Emotional Growth of Terry Malloy

- At the beginning Terry is tied emotionally and morally to Friendly and Charlie.
- He is burdened by his guilt but cannot face the necessity of changing.
- He is charmed by Edie and we see a more natural, spontaneous Terry.
- He denies the Rummy's charge that he is a 'bum'.
- Terry experiences the joy of first love.
- Edie's passionate command to tell her the truth challenges him to turn his back on his hard-learned philosophy, 'Do it to him before he does it to you'. He is left full of self-disgust.
- The death of Dugan and Barry's sermon motivate Terry to act (for example, punching Tullio is his first independent moral act).
- Motivated by his love for Edie, Terry looks to Father Barry for help and owns up to Edie about his involvement in Joey's murder.
- He confronts Charlie with what has happened to him.
- He confronts Edie with the truth of her feelings for him. 'Edie you love me.'
- Terry discovers the body of Charlie and seeks revenge.
- He is confronted by Barry and realises that testifying is his best course of action
- Terry is isolated because of his testimony, but can now comprehend and freely speak the truth about the evil on the waterfront

## Questions

- What emotions hinder Terry's moral development?
- What values hinder his development?
- Make a list of the times he expresses feelings for others.
- What evidence is there that his so-called lack of feeling is not an essential part of his personality?

## The Corrupting Influence of Evil

### Joey Doyle's Murder

The audience is plunged into the shocking reality of life on the waterfront with the image of the falling body of Joey Doyle quickly followed by Truck's vile humour. We see the workers gathered around the body of Joey all agreeing that keeping quiet is the 'one thing they learned'. Even Pop, Joey's father, is resigned; and Father Barry seems only concerned to administer the conventional last sacrament. The absence of a conventional reaction is remarkable, so accustomed are the workers to such retribution that they cannot do or feel anything.

### Question

- How is Father Barry dressed in this scene? Why, in particular, is he not wearing a hat?

## Language and Silence

We see abundant evidence of criminal activity in the bar but we also notice that, generally, no one talks unless called on by Friendly. Most in the bar remain silent. When Friendly speaks he corrupts the language, using words like 'your Uncle Johnny'. Charlie colludes in this lying pretence, telling Terry that 'You've got a real friend here'; and Terry's reply means he acts out the lie.

Charlie's elder brother approach to Terry confuses him and makes him question what he honestly feels. Charlie's definition of 'stoolin' is an obvious attempt to manipulate Terry. Charlie's advice, 'Johnny wants a favour, don't even think about it', reveals the approach to life Charlie is trying to encourage in Terry.

### Questions

- How do the other workers respond when the investigators ask if they know where Terry is?
- How does Terry speak to them?
- As Terry is being interviewed, what else can the audience see?

## The Despair that Such a Milieu Breeds

When K.O. Dugan speaks out at the 'Shape Up' he is accosted by Truck and Tullio and is warned by the others to be careful. The two thugs respond to Dugan without thinking. Their insults 'wise guy, big mouth' are no more than name-calling, but they have impact on the others because of who they are and what the workers know they can do. No one else speaks out. Only Dugan has the courage and the wit to break the silence.

As the men gather, we see J.P., Friendly's extorting banker, extract money from the grieving Pop under the pretence of being generous. The hypocrisy of 'I'm willing to take a chance' is too much for Dugan, whose wit hits the mark. Pop can do no more than complain.

As the 'Shape Up' forms we notice that a number of police are there to help keep order, but they do nothing to intervene while Big Mac torments the men. The pleasure Mac derives from tormenting the men is shown in his eyes, and the contemptuous remarks from the two thugs make clear the emotional rewards of corrupt activity.

### Questions

- What do the men do when they do not work that day?
- What happens at a typical 'local' meeting?
- What does Jimmy Collins say about the waterfront to Father Barry?

## The Presence of the Thugs at the Wedding

Terry and Edie's moment of innocent happiness as they hug in the dark is utterly spoiled by the sudden emergence of the faces of Big Mac and Truck, and the huge and ugly figure of Barney yelling as he walks towards them. The presence of evil is utterly inescapable and the moment of happiness is destroyed.

## Questions

- How does the change in the camera angles affect the development of this scene?
- How does Terry's mood change?
- How does Edie change?

## The Other Murders

What is particularly chilling about the murder of Dugan is the clear evidence of team work involved. A signal from Friendly is picked up by Tullio and passed on to Big Mac, who bides his time before he gives the signal. Mac concentrates on his task of murder as if it were simply part of his normal activities.

The sinister calling of Terry's name out of the darkness, and the attempt on the lives of Edie and Terry, is a terrifying prelude to the moment when he finds the body of Charlie and comprehends the nature of the evil he faces. Charlie's murder is more alarming because it is an execution, and because of the way his body is presented for Terry's view. Charlie's failure to remove Terry as a threat to the mob has been anticipated and Charlie's end is inevitable. When Charlie tells the taxi driver to take him to 'the garden' light suddenly shines on the driver's face and he swings the steering wheel with a grisly determination. The pattern of bullet holes on Charlie's coat suggests he faced a firing squad. The murder has visible impact on both Terry and Edie. Terry's almost physical agony changes into the determination to avenge his brother. The shock that Edie suffers is shown in her desire to run away, and in her physical revulsion at the sight of the bloody corpse. The clinical nature of these murders show they are a matter of 'business' decision-making and as such are cold-blooded.

## Questions

- Who closes the door after the cab has driven into the garage?
- Who sits above the garage reading the paper?
- There is one other woman who speaks in the film and she has only two scenes. Why is she present in the film?
- How does she affect the atmosphere of this scene?

## Goodness

### The Presence of Goodness

We become aware of the presence of goodness through its effect on others. Some examples include:

- Edie Doyle's impact on Father Barry
- Truck's apology to Father Barry while he clears the dock of unemployed longshoremen
- Terry's decision to give the work tab to Edie
- The Rummy's response to Edie and to Joey Doyle's memory
- Edie's tender touching of Joey's coop
- The quiet attentive response of the longshoremen to the 'sermon in the hold'



- Pop's fear for Edie if she stays.

### **Images of Goodness**

There are some specific images that evoke notions of goodness, dignity, strength and suffering:

- The statues of Jesus and the saints in the church
- Father Barry's identification of the men in the church with the twelve apostles
- The spectacle of the body of Dugan rising from the hold with Father Barry and Doyle
- Pop Doyle's fury at being tossed aside during the fight for the tabs
- Pop holding out his arms, showing Edie how he has suffered for her
- Father Barry's determination to speak in spite of being attacked
- K.O. Dugan's tough wit
- The work of the Crime Commission.

### **Actions of Goodness**

Actions, gestures and clear expressions of goodness can be identified in these moments:

- Edie's indignant response to Father Barry
- Father Barry's request for a cigarette from Dugan
- K.O. Dugan's decision to testify
- Terry's consideration for Edie inside and outside the church
- Father Barry's 'sermon in the hold'
- Edie's gift of Joey's jacket to Terry
- Terry's concern for his pigeons
- Terry's kindness to Tommy
- Father Barry's punch
- Father Barry's moral confrontation of Terry
- The stern admonition of the second investigator to Terry to tell the truth
- The first investigator's questions to Terry about his boxing.

### **Questions**

- Why does Father Barry punch Terry?
- Why does he help him up immediately afterwards?
- Where else in the film does Father Barry respond in such a fiery manner?
- Why does Father Barry make such a perfunctory sign of the cross at the end of his sermon?

## America and What it Stands for

Kazan further explores some key American values – in particular, those concerning rights and justice.

- When Father Barry first speaks to the men at the waterfront he is told 'it ain't part of America'. The view of exciting Manhattan from the Hoboken docks is clouded by smoke and mist. Hoboken is grimy, cold and arid.
- In the church, when K.O. Dugan explains the meaning of 'D and D', Barry tells him that 'in this country we have ways of fighting back....testifying for what you know is right'.
- Father Barry makes a number of statements in the film that align the idea of testifying to American judicial institutions with moral rightness: 'You fight him tomorrow in the courtroom with the truth, as you know the truth'. Barry explicitly connects being honest to yourself with the act of testifying.
- The two investigators are insistent and unambiguous in what they want from Terry.
- As Edie tries to convince him that he should leave the waterfront Terry looks over towards a now smoke-free Manhattan skyline and sees a beautiful ocean liner beginning its journey. He tells Edie he is going to the waterfront to get his rights – that is, his rights as an American, in a beautiful rich country.

### Questions

- What does the film say America stands for?
- Do we see evidence of these values in the portrayal of the Crime Commission?
- How does the first investigator approach Terry on the rooftop?
- Why does the director have him complain about the stairs?
- What picture of the pursuit of justice does this episode give us?
- How does he approach Terry at other times? Why?

## Working class life

### Poverty

There are many pictures and events in the film which reveal the poverty of the working class:

- The tenements, especially Pop and Edie's apartment
- Terry's jacket with holes
- K.O. Dugan's first jacket
- Pop's inability to take a day off the day after Joey's death
- The desperation of the men to get work: 'Who do you see to get a day's pay around here?'
- Terry's statement to Edie about the need to stay in the good books of the people in power to 'get a little change in your pocket'
- Pop's struggle to keep Edie at school

- The necessity for children to live on the rooftops – in the first rooftop scene we see Tommy expertly sliding down a steep roof

### **Family Difficulties**

- Tommy's comments about the 'marriages' of the pigeons
- Terry's life in an orphanage
- The necessity to send Edie away to school
- The nuns' treatment of Terry as a child.

### **Working Class Solidarity**

- Pop's generosity in passing Joey's jacket to K.O. Dugan;
- Dugan's decision to pass on his own jacket to someone else;
- The workers' offer to make up Pop's wages out of their own;
- The importance of staying D and D.

### **Humour**

- Dugan and Pop joking about Dugan's dream of unloading a boat full of Irish whisky
- Dugan's backchat to Tullio and Truck
- Dugan's suggestion to J.P. that he drop dead now to test his theory that Pop will realise what a friend he's been when he dies.

### **Questions**

- Instead of testifying, what else could the workers do?
- What happens at union meetings in the 'local'?
- How are Jimmy Collins and his friends portrayed in the church?
- How do they behave when Terry is being assaulted?
- What conclusion about the workers does the film expect us to draw?

# LANGUAGE AND STYLE

## The Script

### Present and Past

*On the Waterfront* was made in 1954, not long after two of the great American plays *A Streetcar named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman*. As with both of these works, the great naturalistic plays such as *Hedda Gabler* derive their power from the impact of the past on the present. Bud Schulberg wrote a script, which is aware of the power of theatrical naturalism, where the past sometimes informs the scenes of the present. Adding this dimension to the script assisted the Method trained actors create their 'back story'.

The most obvious example of the blending of the present with the past is the scene outside the church when Terry and Edie speak openly for the first time. When Terry says 'You don't remember me' and Edie instantly replies 'I remembered you the first time I saw you', the moment suddenly takes on much deeper significance, and intimacy between the two is suddenly possible – the young people communicate their a shared past, a history on which a future can be built. This scene is famous because of Brando's iconic use of Terry's glove, but the scene's final impact owes much to the way the script helps the actors use the past to enlarge the significance of the present.

The scene with Terry, Edie and Tommy on the roof shows the past meeting the present in a more cinematic way. Tommy and the other 'Golden Warrior' are images of Terry and Joey as boys. They hero-worship Terry, as perhaps Terry once worshipped Charlie and Friendly. These boys, the name 'Golden Warriors', the references to Terry's flock and to Joey's birds and the play fight between Terry and Tommy evoke a history of a romantic boyhood on the rooftops. Tommy's grim expressions in this scene tell us this time of boyhood is passing. The scene now becomes a rite of passage. This delicate creation of a past enriches the intimate moment we then experience, so that we disassociate Terry from the dross of his association with the murder. Instead, he becomes a shy but charming young man, full of feeling, asking a pretty but shyer girl out on their first date.

The cab scene is the most famous in the film, and one of the most famous scenes in the history of twentieth century cinema. Apart from the shocking revelation of the past, the scene depends for its impact on the stellar performances of both actors, but particularly on Brando's complete inhabiting of the character of Terry Malloy. Terry's most significant utterance is 'It was you, Charlie'. It is a bleak final judgment, the end of childhood admiration and the end of Charlie's influence on him. The residue of goodness and love in Charlie means he cannot kill his brother to save his own skin. Charlie realises his responsibility for Terry's misery. His remorse, and his awareness of the inevitable, border on tragedy.

### Questions

- How does Terry remember Edie?
- How does Edie remember Terry?
- How do these memories help the two young people to be more at ease with each other?
- Why are there two Golden warriors on the roof?

- Why is Tommy so quick to correct Edie when she calls the pigeon a 'she'?
- After Terry pushes the gun away, why does Charlie suddenly talk about his weight? What has Terry's response done to Charlie?
- When Father Barry advises the workers in the hold to 'wise up' he is echoing Charlie's advice to Terry in the railway yard. What is the point of such repetition? Are there any other examples you can find?

## **Imagery**

The script includes terms from Christianity that have a visual correspondence in the film.

## **Saints**

In Chapter 9, the Rummy refers to Joey Doyle as a saint. He is also referred to as 'the best kid in the neighbourhood' and we are also told that 'everyone loved Joey – the little kids to the old rummies'. Joey's jacket becomes something of a holy relic. When Edie receives it in the Hold, she cradles it like a baby. Still holding it the same way, she gives it to Terry, who is not seen wearing it till he is 'worthy', that is until he has told the truth as he knows it. When he goes to the 'Shape Up' he walks proudly, wearing the jacket like armour, his demeanour completely different from that at the first 'Shape Up'.

## **Crucifixion**

In his 'Sermon in the Hold', father Barry refers to the murders of Joey Doyle and K. O. Dugan as crucifixions. Behind him are two crossed pieces of wood and a vertical shadow. The pelting of Father Barry with rubbish recalls the stoning of Jesus on the way to Calvary. When Terry is trying to make out the body of Charlie, the blood from his cut forearm drips into the centre of his hand, recalling the nails on the cross and alluding to Christ's stigmata. His gentle lifting of Charlie recalls the disciples' removal of Jesus from the cross.

## **Questions**

- What is the significance of the big liner going down the Hudson River as Terry reaches for his hook?
- Why do we keep seeing the Empire State Building? What part of Manhattan is it in? What does it stand for historically?
- What is the significance of the hawks that Terry mentions twice in the film?
- Who is in the photo on the wall of the bar?
- Why does Friendly want such a photo on the wall?
- What is the significance of Terry's throwing his gun at the photo?

## **Settings**

### **The Rooftops**

The rooftops are ugly, grey and dotted with TV aerials, and provide a view of the dirty industrial world of the Hudson River. Yet they are a sanctuary for Terry. Above the dirt and evil of the city, the wide, open skies provide a dramatic contrast in scale, compared with the closed-in streets and bars depicted below. It is a place where he

can be himself, run across the buildings like a cat, be what he was as a child, a romantic 'Golden Warrior'. The younger boys' admiration for him shows us that at least part of him is not a bum, that the idealistic hopes of youth still burn in him somewhere.

The roof is 'the neighbourhood' where children like Terry and Joey Doyle grew up. It also the scene of poignant first love, where the jealous kid brother is told to 'go fix the roof' so the big brother can ask the pretty girl for a date. It is a place where he can watch for hawks in a way he cannot do on the waterfront. At night the roof, lit by the electric lights shining through the skylights, seems a romantic place. It is the place where Edie lovingly covers Terry with Joey's jacket and where they kiss for the first time.

### **Johnny Friendly's Bar**

The bar appears in two scenes: Chapter 4, where we are introduced to Friendly for the first time; and in Chapter 23, where Terry goes to seek revenge.

In Chapter 4, Friendly holds court, calling and dismissing underlings at will. The gang is assembled with various hangers-on. The camera is mostly positioned in the middle of the room, but follows Friendly as he moves about 'throwing his weight around'. At the beginning of this scene, the camera seems to peer into the crowded smoke filled pool room, past faces watching a fight on TV and into the bar room beyond. In all parts of the room men stand with blank, impassive faces, which turn to follow the boss as he moves through his domain. Time after time the camera peers at faces, one behind the other, all silent. The director achieves a depth of field that suggests the murky depths of evil. As Terry leaves, after being bought off, he walks a path between two lines of thugs whose faces all turn together and stare after him as he passes into the bar room. He is caught and held in their gaze as he ambles out of sight.

In Chapter 23, the bar is almost deserted as Terry bursts through the door seeking revenge. The room is lit by a couple of weak fluorescent lights and is eerily quiet. Terry's voice echoes as he speaks. Terry carefully opens the door into the poolroom to see only J.P. at a table drinking coffee and playing Patience. On the pool table are laid out three white balls in a triangle. There is no sound. Behind Terry's head we see a forlorn mounted deer's head hanging on a metal wall, a pretence of decoration that only emphasises the complete absence of any human creativity in the room. The bar room evokes an overwhelming sense of aridity.

### **Questions**

- In the second bar scene, how does the bar man behave when Terry arrives?
- How does he speak to Terry?
- How does J.P. behave?
- How does the behaviour of these two men reflect the atmosphere of the scene?

### **The Crime Commission Hearing**

The Crime Commission is crowded and busy, the chief attorney aggressive, passionately involved in his desire to get at the truth. We look across the room to see Terry arriving and Big Mac giving a ridiculous lying testimony that is making the spectators laugh. On the side of the room are seats for those called to testify.

Friendly and his chief thugs are there staring malevolently at Terry, but their impact seems much lessened, confined as they are to the side of the room. In the main gallery, we see Edie, Father Barry and the good workers watching him with hope in their eyes. The presence of others from outside the waterfront reduces Friendly's status and he seems much more like a crass bully, his suit and tie untidy and messed up.

### Questions

- Why do you think the director decided to interrupt this scene with the switch to 'Mr Upstairs', when he could have included it elsewhere?
- Why do you think Kazan decided to have the real names and legal titles of the thugs called out?
- Why does the prosecuting attorney appear in the hearing looking so untidy?

### Sound and Music

Leonard Bernstein's music plays a crucial role in many scenes of *On the Waterfront*. The musical score accompanying the film both reflects and intensifies the feelings of the characters, as well as the different levels of tension in the scenes. The prominent part music plays in this film in the film is a development of Kazan's use of music, in both the play and the film of *A Streetcar named Desire*. 'We danced the Varsouviana,' says Blanche to Mitch, and the music playing in the background is heard only in the mind of Blanche, and by the audience. This is a device borrowed from Expressionist Theatre.

At the 'Shape Up', as the rising tide of frustration overflows into anger and desperate brawling, the music 'documents' this distress, the brass, augmenting the degrading impact of the desperate struggle for a day's pay. As Edie enters the struggle, the focus of the camera changes, and concentrates on her and Terry. At that moment, the brass recedes and the repetitive theme is taken up by flutes, a more 'feminine' sound which comes to an end with a loud brass fanfare at the moment of Terry's realisation. In this scene, the music not only documents the struggle but also echoes the feelings and even thoughts of the characters involved.

The use of music to portray the inner feelings of the characters' minds is a key part of the passionate scene between Edie and Terry in the apartment. Kazan employs industrial noise to similar effect. The blowing of the industrial whistle when Terry reveals his part in Joey's death communicates Edie's intense emotional disorientation at the horrifying news.

### Questions.

- When are drums heard and what functions do they serve?
- In the apartment scene, what are the feelings and thoughts Terry must deal with? Why is the music so harsh and loud?
- What is the aural impact of the whistle? Why does the director want the audience to physically register this impact?



# CLOSE STUDY OF SELECTED SCENES

## Chapter 11, (32:00-36:06),

### Edie goes to the pigeon coop

This scene is an expression of Edie's independence from her father. Her hair is untied and she is walking, seemingly with no particular end in mind. She walks past Joey's coop, with a rag and his cap, relics of a loved brother, hanging from the wire. She touches the wire tenderly before spotting Terry training his birds and she hurries over to him. Her face and hair, framed by the twisted bar of rusty iron seem beautiful, but ascetic. They are both shy and reserved.

- Why are the two boys present in this scene?
- What are we learning about Terry from his relationship with Tommy?

When Edie mentions that Joey used to race pigeons, Terry replies that he is taking care of them. Edie seems surprised that the 'kid brother of Charlie the gent' could be interested in pigeons. Terry can give no developed reason for being interested when he says, 'I just go for 'em' – suggesting his interest springs from something he has no words for, his essential self.

- Terry mentions the danger of hawks to Edie twice in the film. What is the significance of this?
- What does this concern for hawks tell us about Terry?
- Why are the two boys so unhappy at Edie's arrival?
- Terry invites Edie to see his pigeons. Why does the music begin to play at this point?

The scene now suddenly takes on an intimacy not seen in the film up to this moment. The little 'lesson' about the fidelity of pigeons seems a spontaneous response to Edie's beauty and the delicate passing of the egg through the wire is a wordless but intimate contact between the two. Edie's response to the appearance of the egg is artless and charming. Terry gently and tentatively asks Edie to have a beer with him. He is sensitive to her shyness but gently encouraging. She seems shocked and bewildered by the sudden release of the pigeon.

- Why does Terry send Tommy on his way?
- As Terry invites Edie to have a glass of beer with him, at which angle is the camera positioned on their faces? Why is this position significant in this scene?
- Terry smiles. Where else in the film does he smile? What do his smiles tell us about him?
- How would you describe Edie's response to Terry at this moment?
- Although the music is the same theme, how is it changing?
- Why does the camera concentrate so much on Edie's hair in this scene?
- What is the significance of Terry's release of the pigeon at the end of this scene?

## Chapter 14, (41:25-46:08),

### The Wedding

The scene begins with a distressed and slightly tipsy Edie suddenly caught up in the middle of a boisterous wedding party. The released energies as symbolised by the sped up Wagnerian Wedding March, seems too much for her and she needs to be rescued by Terry. The gallant Terry re-emerges and chivalrously asks her to dance. His humorous remark about his lack of a tuxedo and his comment that she dances divinely as they join the wedding party are further examples of his 'natural' courtesy.

- Discuss the importance of music in this scene.
- How is Edie different from the bride?
- What is the significance of the sudden change to an Irish jig?
- Why are Terry and Edie suddenly photographed from the ceiling through 'wedding bell' decorations?

As they dance Terry swings Edie around and they hug each other. Edie has fallen into his arms and we see them hugging with an embracing bride and groom also in shot. They seem in a world of their own for a short time before the lights go on, the camera angle changes and we see they are in the midst of Friendly's thugs.

- What does this shocking moment reveal about Terry's predicament?
- How do the expressions on Terry's and Edie's faces change?

The two Crime Commissioners suddenly arrive and the first officer serves a subpoena on Terry politely but forcefully while the second one watches, his face framed by Terry and the first officer. When the second officer speaks the camera changes to a full close up and he forcefully spells out what the two men expect from Terry. When they are gone Edie starts to pressure Terry to find out what happened to Joey and to rouse him to action.

- Why is Terry unable to respond to Edie as she wants him to?
- What advice does Terry give to Edie?
- What is his reason for giving it?
- Terry says Edie is driving him crazy. What does this statement really mean and where else in the film does he say similar things?
- How does this scene reveal not only Terry's predicament, but also his mental and moral struggle?

## Chapter 22 and 23, (1:16:16-1:19:00),

### The discovery of Charlie and Terry's arrival in the bar

The lorry drives past to reveal the body of Charlie in the distance. As it goes on its way a flood of grey light suddenly falls on the hanging corpse and the urgent cacophony halts. The music changes to the mournful theme we heard in the cab as Terry confronted Charlie with the reality of what he had done. The camera concentrates first on Terry's then on Edie's face as they venture back into the alley. Edie's beautiful and innocent face framed by the luxuriant flowing hair shines out of the blackness. Both struggle to see what is there. As Terry peers into the night Edie's face is in darkness. He alone registers the utterly unmistakeable vision of evil

– the hanging corpse of his executed brother – his camel-haired coat with five neat bullet holes over the heart.

The camera zooms in on the body with its expressionless face and bulbous lips so we cannot avoid the brutal spectacle. We have time to take in the obvious deliberation behind the theatrical staging of the corpse and the brutal, cold-blooded efficiency of the execution which give the final lie to the name 'Friendly'. Horrified, but with resignation Terry gently lifts down the body of his brother. Edie is behind Terry, a shocked spectator to this final intimate moment between the two brothers. Her face betrays not grief, but instead registers revulsion at the corpse Terry is holding with such love. He is grief-stricken and almost unable to say anything.

His simple statement, 'They got Charlie', is Terry's way of realising, of making real for himself his loss and the rage he feels. The poignancy of this moment is intensified by the mournful music and Edie's distress and need to be comforted. Terry punches his knee, and as he pulls out Charlie's gun and with a deliberate flourish swears his oath of revenge, we see his almost physical agony compress into rage as the change in timbre from strings to brass signals his decision to act. His complete involvement in his grief and plan for revenge renders him impervious to Edie's distress and fear. Terry seems to see his revenge as a sacred mission.

As he directs Edie to 'Do what I tell ya', he seems removed from her, his concentration already elsewhere. As he walks down the alley passing in and out of shadow, Edie looks down at Charlie, whom we can no longer see, sickened and terrified. Her body, pressed against the brick makes shadows on the wall as she inches her way past the body. The music swells to a crescendo as Terry blasts through the door. The camera shoots him from below as he walks the full length of the bar. The music suddenly cuts out and his voice echoes off the low ceiling in the eerie silence of the feebly lit grey, smoky bar.

- What different things do we learn about Terry and Edie in this scene?
- Why do Terry and Edie move in and out of shadow in this scene?
- What is the function of the music in this scene? In which parts of the film is the absence of music important?

## FURTHER ACTIVITIES

### Themes

Some themes explored in the novel and outlined in Section 6 of this guide, 'Issues and themes', are listed again below:

- The corrupting influence of evil
- Goodness
- America
- Moral growth
- Working class life

Draw up a table as follows, and add your observations on each of the above listed themes.

Theme	Incidents which develop the theme	Key characters	Quotes	Connections with other themes
Goodness	Sermon in the hold	Father Barry, Edie, Terry, Pop.	'Droppin a sling on K.O. Dugan because he was gonna spill his guts'	Terry realises that he has a responsibility to tell what he knows – Terry's growth

### Watching Other Films

- Students could watch the following films to provide a context for *On the Waterfront*.
- The 1950 film *Panic in the Streets* shows how Kazan develops his sense of what one reviewer calls 'the grit and dirt of inner city life'. Review at [http://www.dvdmoviecentral.com/ReviewsText/panic\\_in\\_the\\_streets.htm](http://www.dvdmoviecentral.com/ReviewsText/panic_in_the_streets.htm) (last accessed 12/5/2009)
- The 1959 film *Ben Hur*, especially the crucifixion scenes, would be interesting to use as background for a discussion of Father Barry's 'sermon in the hold'.
- It would be useful to show some selected scenes and music from the 1956 film *West Side Story*. Consider the following questions as a way of beginning discussion:
  - What differences are there between the story of Tony and Maria and that of Terry and Edie?
  - What similarities between the music in the two films can you notice?

- Examine in particular the words and context of the song 'There's a place for us'. How does this song echo Edie's wishes?
- How is the city being represented in all these examples? Where is the real America?
- The 1951 film *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which starred both Brando and Karl Malden, is useful for students to understand the enormous impact of Brando on screen acting and the versatility of Karl Malden who won an Oscar for his portrayal of Mitch. Students might notice that Brando seems physically larger in *Streetcar* than he does in *On the Waterfront*. Students could compare similarities and differences in Brando's two performances.
- Students can find photographs of the cast of *Streetcar* at <http://www.imdb.com/media/rm1482856448/tt004408> (last accessed 12/05/2009).
- Students could be divided into groups to prepare short talks on the relationship of the above films to the themes and imagery of *On the Waterfront*.
- A viewing of *High Noon* starring Gary Cooper and Grace Kelly might be useful. Students could compare the challenges both principal protagonists face, and compare the presentation of the townspeople in *High Noon* with that of the workers in *On the Waterfront*. Are both films endorsing similar values?

## Writing Tasks

- Write Edie's letter to her Mother Superior explaining why she is not returning to school.
- Write the first crime commissioner's report on Terry Malloy and how he proposes to influence him to testify.
- Write the news report on the day that ended John Friendly's influence on the waterfront union.
- Compile a list of all the times the word 'truth' is mentioned and by whom it is mentioned.
- Compile a list of moral statements and by whom they are said.

## Discussion Topics

- Why is the character of Edie sidelined? Is it simply a problem of plot or is it central to the way she is portrayed?
- Is the ending of *On the Waterfront* similar in some ways to that of a Hollywood Western?
- What is the function of Charlie in the film? What is his struggle and what does his presence add to the film?
- Discuss the camera angles in the hold of the ship and at the docks in the final scene.
- Discuss the role of Father Barry in the film. What does the director do to make him into someone the audience can trust?
- Where does the notion of 'D and D' come from? Why would the working class develop such an ethic?

## Comparing Scenes

- The scene where Terry helps Edie down the movable staircase; versus the scene outside the church building with her descent down the tenement staircase as Terry goes in search of Charlie.
  - What is visually different? How does this difference show the change in Edie?
- Terry's entry into Johnny Friendly's bar in Chapter 4; versus his entry into the near deserted bar in Chapter 23.
  - What is different about the mise en scène in the two episodes?
  - The camera angles?
  - The noise versus the quiet?
- The first 'Shape Up'; versus the 'Shape Up' in Chapter 25.
  - What is the difference in Big Mac's demeanour, Terry's demeanour, Terry's clothes and his way of speaking?

## Sound and Music

- There are a number of recurring musical themes in the film; for example, the mournful tune played when Charlie's body is discovered. Some students could watch the film and map the key musical themes (the *leitmotifs*) to the scenes in which they occur.
- Students could write on the relation between the musical themes, the story, the characters and other cinematic devices in scenes such as the 'Shape Up', the attack at the church, the walk in the park and Terry's forced entry into Edie's apartment.
  - The music seems intrusive sometimes. Why does the Director want such intrusion?
  - Why does the director make use of the industrial whistle to drown out Terry's voice when he tells Edie of his involvement in Joey's death?

## Script Study

- Transcribe Father Barry's sermon on the death of K.O. Dugan.
  - Describe Barry's range of emotion in the speech.
  - What persuasive techniques does he employ?
  - What directorial purpose is the speech intended to fulfil?
  - Compare the message and tone of Father Barry's speech with 'The Beatitudes' in the 'Sermon on the Mount' from Chapter 5 of 'Matthew's Gospel'.  
<http://www.lifeofchrist.com/teachings/sermons/mount/beatitudes.asp>
- Transcribe Johnny Friendly's justification for killing Joey Doyle. List Friendly's arguments. What persuasive techniques does he employ?
- How does Pop try to convince Edie to return to the convent?

## KEY QUOTES

'Terry: Gee, he wasn't a bad kid, that Joey.

Tullio: A canary.

Truck: Maybe he could sing, but he couldn't fly.

Charlie: Hey, come on. I'll buy you a drink?'

(3:49)

This is Terry's response immediately after the death of Joey Doyle. It reveals much about Terry, and also the frightening environment he must survive in. Terry is timid, and also inarticulate. He has no words to express the shock he feels. Tullio's definition of the courageous Joey is brutally dismissive and belittling. Truck's capacity to joke about the death reveals a mind completely absent of human compassion, and gives us a first glimpse in to the vicious world of the waterfront. The distress shown in Terry's face and voice is swept aside by the two thugs. Charlie understands how he feels, but his offer to buy Terry a drink is just an attempt to help Terry get over some unpleasant feelings.

'Fr. Barry: There's no other union in the country that would stand for a thing like that.

Joey Collins: The waterfront's tougher, Father! Like it ain't part of America.'

(18:40)

Father Barry, having decided to actively engage with the people in his parish, is horrified by the degradation of the 'Shape Up' and expresses his indignation at the treatment the men have received. Throughout the movie, Barry gives voice to the indignation that others feel but cannot utter. The reply by Jimmy Collins, Joey Doyle's best friend, positions the audience to see the waterfront as a place whose values are the antithesis of what America stands for. By implication, America is not like that at all.

'First investigator: You're being served with a subpoena, Mr. Malloy.

Terry: What?

First investigator: Mid statehouse, courtroom nine, ten o'clock Friday morning.

Terry: What's the matter? I told you. I don't know nothing about that.

First Investigator: You can bring a lawyer if you wish. You're privileged under the constitution to protect yourself from questions that may implicate you in any crimes.

Terry: You know what they're askin' me to do?

Second Investigator: All we want you to do, Mr. Malloy, is to tell the truth.'

(44:21)

Like Father Barry, the two waterfront investigators explicitly give voice to moral viewpoints that oppose those of the waterfront culture. They arrive at the wedding and the first inspector politely but forcefully serves the subpoena. While brushing aside Terry's objections, he speaks to him respectfully and patiently, explaining his rights as if he is educating Terry by example. He calls him Mr. Malloy, in contrast to Friendly who, when talking to Charlie refers to him as 'that punch drunk brother of yours'. The second investigator is more impersonal. His response to Terry is direct,



plain and authoritative. His face, framed between Terry and the first investigator, has a direct steady gaze. The shot changes to a full frontal and he speaks purposefully, even forcefully, as he delivers his edict. He is the voice of conscience.

‘Edie: I should have known you wouldn’t tell me. Pop says Johnny Friendly used to own you. Well, I think he still owns you. No wonder everyone still calls you a bum.

Terry: Don’t say that to me Edie. Don’t say that to me now.

Edie: No wonder. No wonder.

Terry: I’m only tryin’ to help you out. I’m tryin’ to keep you from getting hurt. What more do you want me to do?

Edie: More, much, much more.’

(45:28)

From Terry’s point of view, Edie and the investigators are asking the impossible. It goes against everything life has taught him. Edie wants from him what no one has ever demanded before: that he acts for reasons other than those of self-preservation. At this stage of his journey, he is unable to see what they see, that he has a moral responsibility to stop the evil on the waterfront. It is doubly hard for Terry to accept what he needs to do because he is falling in love with Edie and is frightened for her safety. All his experience tells him that Edie needs to ‘wise up’. He is pleading with her in a tone of helpless desperation. At this moment, he is being challenged beyond his capacity to respond.

‘Terry: There’s more to this than I thought Charlie. I’m tellin’ you there’s a lot more... It wasn’t him Charlie, it was you... You was my brother Charlie; you shoulda looked out for me a little bit. You shoulda taken care of me a little bit so I didn’t havta take them dives for the short earned money.

Charlie: I had some bets on for you. You saw some money.

Terry: You don’t understand! I coulda had class! I coulda been a contender! I coulda been somebody – instead of a bum, which is what I am. Let’s face it. It was you, Charlie.’

(1:08:32)

Terry loves Charlie, but he is disillusioned with him. There is pain in his voice as he reproaches Charlie for his neglect. Charlie’s evasive defence of his actions is dismissed as Terry realises in a climactic moment what he could have been, expresses his grief and pain at the loss of his boxing career and the loss of any hope for self-respect. His intimate, sorrowful reproach lays bare the truth of their relationship and renders Charlie unable to influence him any more. Terry faces Charlie with the consequence of his own evil and articulates for himself the truth of his own history.

‘Terry: Wait a minute you! You take them heaters away from you and you’re nothin’ you know that? You take the good goods away and the kickbacks and the shake down cabbages and the pistoleros and you’re nothing. Your guts is all in your wallet and your trigger finger, you know that?

Friendly: You ratted on us, Terry.

Terry: From where you’re standing, maybe, but I’m standin’ over here now. I was rattin’ on myself all those years and I didn’t even know it. You give it to Joey, you give it to Doogan, you give it to Charlie who was one of your own. You think you’re

god almighty but you know what you are? You're a cheap lousy dirty stinkin' crook and I'm glad what I done to you. You hear me? I'm glad what I done.'

(1:34:26)

This is the moment in which Terry finds words to articulate the truth about the waterfront as he now knows it. Friendly accuses him of the worst crime someone on the waterfront can commit – the act of testifying to the law. In Friendly's terms, Terry is a 'canary', a 'pigeon', a 'cheese eater', but these scapegoating terms of abuse no longer carry a sting for Terry. He's 'standin' over here now' – he has moved away from his unthinking identification with the mob and no longer timidly accepts that he is a 'bum'. Instead, he now has the capacity to use language creatively. He picks up Friendly's word 'ratted' and uses it to describe himself, but in a way that would have been impossible for him before Charlie was killed. He has made moral sense out of the evil he has witnessed and he can speak in his own words his judgment of Friendly.

## TEXT RESPONSE QUESTIONS

- 'On the Waterfront is a story about the battle between good and evil.' Do you agree?
- 'On the Waterfront shows that change is only brought about by individual effort.' Do you agree?
- 'On the Waterfront shows that understanding oneself is the key to moral development.' Do you agree?
- 'On the Waterfront is a story about the achievement of self-respect.' Discuss.
- Kazan uses a range of cinematic devices to reveal the emotional and moral struggle of Terry Malloy. Discuss.
- 'The waterfront is tougher. Like it ain't part of America.' How true is this statement?
- Why is it so hard for Terry to 'tell the truth as he knows it'?
- How does the Kazan convey ideas about good and evil in *On the Waterfront*?
- 'On the Waterfront shows that being true to oneself is more important than being loyal to one's friends.' Discuss.
- 'Father Barry and Edie Doyle are crucial in the moral redemption of Terry Malloy.' Do you agree?
- 'The film depends for its impact on the skills of the actors.' Discuss.

# GUIDED TEXT RESPONSES

## Example 1

### Topic:

‘‘I’m standin’ over here now’. At the end of *On the Waterfront* Terry has gained a new understanding of himself and the world.’ Discuss.

### Understanding the Question

Explore the key elements of the topic. For example:

- Explain the quote – occurs at the end; an image of movement; Terry has moved psychologically and morally; note of triumph in his voice
- New understanding of himself – knows he is not a bum; knows he has rights; knows Edie loves him
- New understanding of the world – knows that some people can be trusted; that he needs to stand up for his rights; that staying silent, being ‘D and D’ is wrong
- Film a story about a personal, moral journey.

### Brainstorming

- Terry is released from the burdens of the past – was inarticulate, did not know, could not say what he felt.
- What is he like at the beginning? Confused, timid, burdened, and jealous of the pigeons.
- Friendly’s behaviour at beginning and end.
- Suspicious of investigators.
- Bleak view of the world – ‘do it to him before he does it to you’.
- What changes him? Meeting Edie, death of Dugan, Father Barry, death of Charlie, deciding not to kill Friendly.
- Loses much; old securities, Charlie, pigeons, Tommy.
- Gains awareness that Edie loves him.
- Understands what Charlie has done to him.
- Gains a capacity to find his own words to speak the truth as he knows it.
- Understands that the values of the world outside the waterfront are superior to the values he has grown up with.

### Example Essay Structure

#### Sample Introduction

*On the Waterfront* is a film that portrays the emotional and moral development of an inarticulate man, Terry Malloy, as he struggles to understand and to confront the evil that threatens to destroy him and the woman he loves. For Terry to succeed, he must reject everything his experience has taught him, betray the values of the waterfront culture he knows and speak out the truth about the evil he knows so intimately. Yet by risking everything, Terry gains a self-respect and a sense of

freedom he has never known before. He has 'moved', morally and psychologically. His world now embraces much more than the waterfront.

### **Second Paragraph**

Topic Sentence: The world of Terry Malloy is brutal, uncompromising and stifling.

Notes: Terry is closed in by a world of evil; unable to voice his objections to what was done to him; inarticulate, does not fit comfortably in his world; bullied by Friendly and Charlie; suspicious of investigators. Blank impassive faces shot - outside Friendly's bar. The roof is his only escape: 'They sure got it made, huh? Eatin', sleepin', flyin' around like crazy'.

### **Third Paragraph**

Topic Sentence: When Edie enters Terry's world, she confronts him, not just with qualities of gentleness and kindness, but also with an uncompromising morality that he sees as dangerously impractical.

Notes: Meeting Edie a joy and challenge: 'Do it to him before he does it to you'. Falls in love; brief moment of happiness, surrounded by Friendly's thugs. Edie challenges him: 'No wonder everyone calls you a bum'. Shot - Edie face lit up, berating Terry.

### **Fourth Paragraph**

Topic Sentence: When the death of K.O. Dugan and Father Barry's courageous attack on the corrupt union shake Terry out of his moral paralysis, he knows he needs to act, but his background and his habitual loyalties hold him back.

Notes: Death of K.O. Dugan shakes him out of moral paralysis: 'There's more to this than I thought Charlie. I'm tellin' you, there's a whole lot more'. Held back by loyalty but Charlie's attempt to threaten him allows him to see the truth about his boxing career and to confront Charlie with it: 'It was you, Charlie'. Edie admits she loves him, but the attempt on their lives and the death of Charlie plunge him into a crisis. His terrible loss now makes him dangerous. Confronted by Father Barry he is guided to the right decision: 'You fight him in the courtroom tomorrow with the truth, as you know the truth'.

### **Fifth Paragraph**

Topic Sentence: Having been banished by Friendly, having lost his friends and his pigeons by testifying, Terry has found himself, and can go to the 'Shape Up' to get his rights.

Notes: Feeling isolated, he paradoxically feels able to claim his rights and to speak his mind. Wearing Joey Doyle's jacket, he aligns himself with Joey and K.O. The murder of Charlie has 'broken the spell'. Confronts Friendly, not in the dark, but in the clear light of day in front of thousands of people. Comment on quote embedded in the question. His speech, not very grammatical, but unmistakably clear and direct. Barry understands as Edie does not that Terry must make that last walk by himself to win the war, and to become his own person. Tommy's rejection frees him to 'put away childish things.' Shot - looking at the ship and reaching for his hook. Wearing Joey's jacket which he now has the right to wear, he is able to speak his mind for the first time.

## Example 2

Topic:

'The director uses a range of cinematic devices to reveal the emotional and moral struggle in *On the Waterfront*.' Discuss.

### Understanding the Question

- In order to respond to this question, some considerations involve:
- The world of the film is one where good and evil seem physically real
- Kazan uses full range of cinematic devices to help the audience grasp the moral world of the waterfront
- Camera angles imagery, music, the script and the acting used to convey not just the waterfront but also the mind of Terry as he grapples with the difficulty of what he must do
- Emotional struggle – disturbed by death of Joey Doyle, wanting to believe Friendly and his brother.
- Reluctance to accept responsibility for death of Doyle. Trying to escape from his predicament
- Terry's Moral struggle – naturally good, moved by death of Joey and by Edie's grief grows in his capacity to see the truth; needs the help of the commissioners then of Barry to understand his responsibility and also how to be effective.

### Brainstorming - Images of Evil

Falling body of Joey Doyle; angled shot of Tullio, Truck and Charlie outside Friendly's bar; faces watching Friendly; Friendly slapping around Slim; Face of Big Mac tormenting the workers at the 'Shape Up'; faces of two thugs above the crowd at the 'Shape Up'; Tullio and Truck laughing as they watch the workers desperately fighting for a tab; hypocrisy of J.P. as he extorts money from Pop; appearance of the faces of the thugs at the dance; Tullio's face in the railway yard as Friendly and Charlie berate Terry; the 'interrogation' of Charlie in the 'local' with the silent faces and Friendly's feet in Charlie's face; the hanging body of Charlie; the pool room in Friendly's bar silent and empty except for J.P. playing patience.

### Images of Goodness

The face of Edie as she attacks Father Barry, blazing with anger; the faces of Barry, the workers and the statues of Jesus and the saints all looking at Terry; the stern face of the second commissioner; the image of Pop showing Edie his arms; the bleeding face of Father Barry as he crosses himself at the end of his sermon, seething with indignation; the worker passing Joey's jacket to Edie in the hold; father Barry, Pop and the body of Dugan rising from the hold; Edie on the roof, cradling the jacket in her arms; Terry tenderly taking down the body of Charlie; Terry in the pigeon cage, reaching for his hook.

## **Structuring and Sequencing of Ideas**

### **Introduction**

Define terms, 'emotional' and 'moral'. Director makes a world where good and evil have a palpable existence. Film shows Terry passing from denying his moral responsibility to an active confrontation of evil and an experience of personal freedom.

### **First Paragraph Notes**

Image of Charlie and the thugs standing outside Friendly's Bar symbolises Terry's unease with his life and connections. Terry is at a different angle in two shots. His standing at right angles to the thugs symbolises his discomfort in this group and distress at what he has unwittingly done to Joey. At the beginning Terry is shocked by the realisation of his part in Doyle's murder; he had not been able to understand the evil he was becoming involved in. Scene outside bar with angled shots and three impassive faces shows he literally and emotionally does not fit in. Scene with pigeons show him as someone who cares, burdened with guilt and despair, longing to be free.

### **Second Paragraph Notes**

Evil that surrounds Terry shown at work in the 'Shape Up'. Camera shows two 'big men' towering over the works as Terry is confronted by commissioners. Camera focuses on the beady eyes of Big Mac as he torments the men. The rising music seems to describe and reflect the desperation of the workers. As the men scramble desperately for a tab, Terry unable to acknowledge any moral responsibility, struggles with sadness after realising who Edie is.

### **Third Paragraph Notes**

Joey Doyle is a central image of goodness. The Rummy's response to Edie, his forlorn pigeon coop, and the passing and cradling of his jacket give him the quality of a martyr. Edie wants Terry to show Joey's courage. The film associates Terry with Joey when we hear he has been taking care of Joey's pigeons. Terry's innate goodness is revealed on the roof as he shows Edie the pigeons. Intimate moment with the egg, the wire symbolising innocent reserve, music tender and joyful. Date with Edie marred by Terry's belief in his powerlessness – dance at the wedding suggests any possibility for happiness spoiled by evil surrounding them. Wedding bells imagery changes to image of couple in the midst of Friendly's thugs Arrival of commissioners represents the other side of the battle that now threatens to destroy all hope of happiness.

### **Fourth Paragraph Notes**

Father Barry's sermon in the hold, the image of him being pelted by rubbish, and his rising from the hold establishes him in the mind of the audience as a force for goodness in the film. His courageous self-assertion moves Terry and provides him with someone to speak to, but he still struggles with past loyalties he seems unable to reject. Yet, the elegant, clean despatch of Tullio in the hold shows us his natural goodness returning – Terry the natural athlete, as we see him on the roof bouncing on the balls of his feet, moving with the other boys across the roofs like a cat, not the shifty bum avoiding the gaze of the commissioners.

### **Fifth Paragraph Notes**

Terry's redemption, involves painful loss and sacrifice. The image of Charlie hanging by a hook is as Barry says in the hold, the crucifixion. Death of Charlie enables Terry



to see the disgusting evil he has lived with all his life. Terry struggles to see and to absorb the evil reality confronting him. Murder of Charlie and the killing of the pigeons cuts Terry free of his past. His reaching for the hook is an image of self-acceptance. He has lost his previous security but he can now speak out for himself, as he says to Friendly, 'I'm standin over here now'. In sharp contrast to his image on the ship where he is shot from below, the camera indicates Friendly's literal and figurative fall from greatness by shooting him from above, the final frames showing him small, insignificant and deserted.

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